

The Artifact

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Summary: After the loss of the Artifact, Spartan Jon Woods must journey to find this artifact before the Covenant. With only a team of Three other Spartans, Jon must fight for his and all other sentient life through the galaxy. Oh, and he's handicapped.

1. The Lost Artifact

He had known they would come back, although he was not sure when. The Covenant grew restless at the constant loss of soldiers, and he had sensed it for years. Lieutenant Jon Woods had a clear imprint of this certain memory on his mind, and it had stuck there ever since it had occurred. He drummed his long, gloved fingers along his M90 Assault Shotgun waiting. Through his visor he saw a small Military Clock which read, through a slight orange hue, 2359. _One Minute, _He thought, _One minute until I can resume my post. One more minute until I can guard the main Entrance to Forerunner Gas Mine Sector 12 'Collosus'. Woods was stationed in the 'trench', as his Unit had named it, which was first priority.

After what seemed like eons, his Military Clock changed to an even 2400. Jon pulled down his firearm in relaxation, but only for a second. A tap on the shoulder set him in a spin, about-face and in crouched position. He aimed the gun at his attacker's gut. Slowly he came to realize he was looking at the familiar MJOLNIR VI set of Armor, but with a Green tint, unlike his own Purple. Rising to his feet he looked into the visor of his ally and pulled two fingers across his own in the shape of a smile, representing the Spartan Smile hand-signal they had been trained to use. Alicia Jackson just nodded at the hand movement he had just made and thrust out her BR55 Battle Rifle. Woods did exactly the same with his M90 and they switched. With another nod, he spun back around and walked towards the lift. Alicia had a way of making him feel small with her gaze, as if she had two Galileian Spartan Lasers implanted in her eyes. Before walking into the large lift, he checked in the corner of his visor, showing the Clock had already reached 0002. Time was moving very slow...slower than normal, but at the moment took no attention to it.

He had already launched up through to the third level, nicknamed Outlook. Crouching into his free fall he hung the Battle Rifle on his back and picked up the discarded Particle Beam Rifle. Jon pulled the scope up immediately and jumped up on the railing. He swept the area twice when he stopped at Alicia who flicked her finger up to the side of her visor, activating the Radio.

"Is Private Dick Marst at your position?" She said, with a hard sense of demand. Her voice, even through her harsh tone was like a breath of fresh air in this Gas Mine and it took several seconds to respond to her question. He quickly touched the side of his own visor and replied.

"No. I cannot see the Private patrolling either. You?" His voice was slightly higher than he had intended, but even still, he pulled up the Rifle again and zoomed into Alicia's position. A wide shake of the head told him that she was resorting to use more body language than her voice. Even so, Jon wished to hear her speak again, but did not press the subject, because he was cut off before his finger moved to his visor. A sharp pain, more agonizing than he had even experienced shot across his low back. Fire erupted in his legs as he descended from the Outlook and fell hard onto the cold ground, cracking his visor. Woods cringed as the pain spread through his body, but he did not dare scream in horror, for it would lead to his certain death. A loud clank found that a second body had fallen near his, but closer to the lift and soon toppled over into it, sending him back to the Outlook. Only for a split second, he had recognized the familiar Blue Phoenix on his shoulder, revealing his identity as Private Marst. His arm fought the increasing pain and clicked on his Radio.

"Dick is dead," He said simply. The lift's gravity pulse hindered his site, but still could see the Spartan's response. She looked a bit taken a-back, but still flicked up her finger to her Visor.

"Are you sure?" She asked, a slight horror in her voice, "How do you..." Jon pointed up to the Third Level. She followed his finger and holstered her Shotgun and pulled out her SRS99C-S2 AM Sniper Rifle. Slowly strafing to her left, she found cover behind the large wall, still looking through her scope. Jon had heard a small squeal in his radio, and activated the translator AI.

"Good job, War," said a long drawn out 'hissing' voice. The person who he had called War grunted in satisfaction, which had told Woods one thing. War was used for pure physical missions, having more brawn than brain.

"Have we...Won?" asked a cowering, weak voice. He then heard the familiar loading of a Particle Beam Rifle.

"I don't know, Famine, why don't you have a look?" It was the same hissing voice, this time much more fierce as Jon heard the Rifle being shoved into the chest of Famine and the familiar sound of the Scope whirring, "What do you see?" The Spartan held his breath, hoping to God that he wouldn't spot Jackson.

"N-Nothing," Famine stuttered and the scope retracted. Jon let out a large sigh of relief.

"Even so," continued the hissing voice, "Pestilence and War, patrol

this Mine and make damn good no one is left. Famine is staying with me." A slight whimper knew that Famine direly feared the person. but did not refuse. The giant clops of feet hitting metal left Jon wondering how such a beast snuck up on him. His finger tapped the side of his head again.

"They're coming for you. If you want to kill one, shoot the one not holding the Beam Rifle. It would help so much," there was a hint of sarcasm in his voice that wasn't exactly meant. He didn't get a response, but he didn't expect one, not in the heat of battle. Still, after a few minutes, 2 shots from her S2 left clouds of smoke revealing her position. No screams of pain or horror came from above him, but a long sinister laugh.

"Get a lock on her position," The voice said, "War, Pestilence, We've found one. Come below our position." Before the voice had even finished he had keyed his own mic.

"You've been spotted. Get the artifact and flee. I'm contacting a Pelican." Quickly, Jon flicked through the channels until he found the UNSC Orbital Space Contact Line.

"Forerunner Gas Mine Sector 12 Colossus requires immediate evacuation via Pelican. I Repeat, Forerunner Gas Mine Sector 12 requires immediate Evac, Over." Clutching at his heart, he wondered if it would be enough. How long would it take for a Pelican to get out here? They were on the Installation 05 Halo. Millions of miles away from Earth, but there was a slight chance. A Slight chance that they could get here in time with Slip Space.

The Artifact. Its protection was dire. If it was not here, he would have no problem sacrificing himself to the attackers. Still, what really bothered Woods was the two Rifle shots Alicia had discharged. Both had hit their mark, he had no doubt of that, but the person did not get harmed. Perhaps he wasn't an Elite? Perhaps he was a Hunter. No, He thought, the AI in my suit hadn't been programmed to translate Hunter speak, if they even spoke at all. Surely even a Golden Elite couldn't survive two shots to the head. All of these contradicting thoughts had ceased when he saw one creature emerge from the left. It was big, Apelike and had thick matted down brown fur. He could see large teeth protruding out of its long head and muscles that seemed to bulge out of their armor. He was sure, if he would ever attack one hand to hand, even in his MJOLNIR VI armor, that he would lose. In one hand he held a peculiar weapon with a large bayonet on the end. Just the look of it made his legs start to flame again.

The second person who had walked out did not look Apelike at all. It was the familiar shape of an Elite, with black armor and two Needlers in its hands. On his shoulder, he had seen, was a symbol of a Human Skull, colored Green. Recognizing this, he saw the Ape's symbol as a Blue skull. They were walking steadily towards Jackson.

"Stop," said the hissing voice, which had surprised Jon, "We are not after a Demon, we are after the Key. So Pestilence, keep guard as we transport it."

"Where?" asked Pestilence, "We do not know the location of this item, Death!" There was a loud screaming sound as the Needler wielding Elite fell down to the ground at Death's feet, two large burns

through its stomach, spewing out purple blood. He turned to War.

"Do you recognize the Key?" Death asked, as calm as he was before, showing no anger or remorse at the loss of a teammate. The ape slightly shook his head as the fellow Elite glowered at him. Retracting his Energy Sword he pointed one finger at a glowing green canister.

"Grab it and lets go." The ape moved to the box and lifted it above his head. Jon winced as he knew that his whole plan had been a failure, but one silver lining struck. The sickening sound of a butt of the Metal S2 hit flesh. Jackson had made one final attempt to defend herself, but had failed. The shrill sinister laugh had shot through the radio again. He hoisted up the Spartan into the air by her neck.

"Who else is here, Demon?" He asked, with a voice that seemed to drop the temperature by 10 degrees. Her head had turned away from Woods, and looked up at the Outlook. She did not speak.

"I asked you a question," He demanded, "Who...Else...Is...Here?" He heard her start to moan in pain, as he knew Death's hand gripped harder.

"No one," She squealed as the Elite activated the Energy Sword again. The familiar pang of Armor Piercing, Fin Stabilized, Discarding Saboted Rounds rebounded off Death's helmet as he looked over his shoulder. The ape directed his gaze at the Outlook as well, and when seeing several Humans sliding down a long rope, threw the canister behind and pulled out the odd weapon with the bayonet.

"No!" shouted the Elite, throwing down Alicia and jumping towards the Key. When it hit the Conveyor Belt, the Container exploded, sending the Artifact flying. It tumbled down and bounced down the Belt until it reached the end of the line, sending it down a dark hole. Death screamed and barreled towards War. Jon had not seen the Sword go in to the Ape, but saw two energy points protruding out from its stomach. War fell down with a shattering thud. Again, he heard several more semiautomatic shots fire at Elite Armor, and had guess whoever had come was on their side, trying to kill Famine, but in vain. Two fast discharges of the Beam Rifle was followed by a yell in pain and the familiar overheating sound. Another sound of Metal hitting flesh told one of his Allies had meleed the Elite, sending it off the Outlook and down to the level above Jon. A triumphant yell had told him the Pelican had come and with several Marines. Two of them had jumped down to the lift and spotted the fallen Spartan.

"Is he...Is he alive?" a Marine asked, and his question was quickly answered as Woods nodded his head, "We've got a Down Spartan! Down Spartan near the lift! Can you get up?" -- The last sentence was directed at him and Jon had shook his head -- "Okay, just hold tight, we'll get you up to the Pelican. Do you have any other men down here?" This question made him look up at Jackson.

"One," he said quietly and pointed to the fellow soldier. The Marine nodded and held his MA5B ICWS Assault Rifle tight and ran to the trench with 5 other Marines who had just jumped down after him. Four Marines stood between Death and the Lift, while the two others grabbed the woman and backed to the the lift. He did not see what they did with Alicia, but from the orders given, he gathered that she

was being carried up to the Pelican via rope. The four Marines however stood still, all Assault Rifles trained on the Elite, who had just laughed. Death had started to walk forward and the result was being fired upon by all four. He chose one Marine at a time and stabbed them through the gut with his Sword.

He did not see what happened next, as two Marines had picked him up be the shoulders and turned him to face the Outlook. They hooked him up to the rope and started the Automatic retractor that pulled him through the Main Entrance. The Two Marines, however stood down below as the rope was pulled up. They shot their Rifles together at the Elite that had just flown up the lift. The ceiling had blocked his site, so he just looked straight at the wall in front of him. The same textures seemed to have passed him hundreds of times before he saw the light shine through the top. The sun came as unhappy greeting, as being in a dark mine had shielded him from such light. It blinded Jon for several minutes, before his visor adjusted, and was pulled up into the Pelican bay. With very limited sight, he still saw two Marines over himself, and Alicia sitting in one of the seats attached to the side.

"You are on a D77H-TCI Pelican, Bravo 043. We will be putting you under gas for the trip back, so hold tight," A Marine said calmly. Jon felt his Helmet being lifted off and a small gas mask pulled over his face. Soon he started to black out, and the world shifted away from his mind...

"Good! You're awake," said an unfamiliar voice. The Spartan opened up his eyes and looked around at his surroundings. He was in a large white room with several chairs attached to the side of the wall. His bed started to rise, putting him in an almost sitting position. Jon moved around his neck examining what he was wearing. His MJOLNIR armor had been removed and instead he wore a simple Hospital Gown. In front of him was a man in a white suit and hat. He was clean shaven and had very large eyebrows. He had put out his hand.

"I'm Sergeant Robert T. Garrison and I have been monitoring your progression through your surgery." The Spartan looked at him with his head slightly tilted.

"Surgery?" The Sergeant nodded.

"Try to move your legs," He said, which was a peculiar demand.

"...My legs. They don-" Jon tried to tell him, but Robert had held up his hand.

"I know what happened to your legs. Just try," The Spartan tried to move his left leg and was answered with a Metallic Energy whir. Only one this had struck through his mind.

"You replaced my legs...?" The Sergeant smiled a bit and shook his head. crouching down at the front of the bed, Jon had heard him press a small button, and felt the bed split below him and slowing fell through into a small chair. As he examined it Woods knew it was not a chair, it was the Covenant Reconnaissance and Rapid Attack vehicle, named by the Corps 'Ghost'.

"We couldn't just replace your legs. Your central nerval system and

spine were ruptured when we found you. Such minimal additions as Bionic legs wouldn't have been enough, so we chose something much more Prototypical. We salvaged a full and untouched Ghost several years ago for analysis, and we thought that since we have done all we could, we could make you a 'wheelchair' as they would've called it more than 500 years ago. By connecting the untouched part of your Spinal Cord into the main energy source, allowing you to utilize your movements the same as you would before this incident, but quite more features. At walking speed you will be going faster than any other infantry, and at running speed, you can outrun any vehicle you meet, should you need to escape. It may take you several weeks to get used to the revamped body, but it will grow on you over time. I just have a few questions to ask you..." The Sergeant paused for a minute to allow the Spartan to absorb all that was said.

"Go ahead," He said slowly.

"Do you know what you were hit with that could cause so much damage, but not actually kill you?" Robert asked, again allowing Jon to absorb the question.

"It was a huge weapon with a large Bayonet on the end. I have no idea what it fired, but a strike from the blade is deadly, and the ammunition must be more," Sergeant Garrison thought the answer over and continued on.

"Two of our Marines saw something...large and fur covered laying on the ground with two plasma marks through its back, yet you had nothing that shaped on you. The only weapon that fit the description was in the hands of the Elite. Was the larger creature on your side and...What was it, exactly?" The last part was added with a bit of sickness.

"He was the enemy and was killed by his own ally. As for what it was...It was dumber than an Elite. It spoke in growls and grunts...Almost...Brutish," The Spartan spoke. Robert looked away from him and said in a sad expression.

"Then you can't explain why they could not be killed, even by a shot to the head, I suppose?" He looked over his shoulder at the Spartan to be met with a slight shake of the head, "On another subject, your armor is in the holding dock, and you will be armed with a M6D HE Magnum Sidearm and a BR55 Battle Rifle, is that understood?" Jon nodded and slowly drove the Ghost out of the split bed.

The memory faded to a white and Lieutenant Jon H. Woods slipped back into the present...

2. Good Fight, Warthog

With a small groan, the Private had picked up the S2 Sniper Rifle and several ammunition cases off the ground of the Cargo bay. With the rifle on his back, he proceeded out the Docking garage to the readied M12 Warthog LRV and dropped the ammo down into the passenger seat. He was slightly frightened by a yell from the top of the base.

"Yo, Private," he looked back, "You can't use the Warthog, I have the keys!" Private Marcus Jones sighed as he saw the small car key jingling on the finger of his Red armored ally. Marcus stepped

forward and closed a circle around his mouth to amplify the sound.

"Can I please have the keys?" The other Spartan laughed at this remark and jumped down from the grey base.

"Corporal gave me the 'Hog, which means you have to be Private _First Class,_ Dangling the keys in front of the Private only to pull them behind his body. Marcus pushed a finger into his ally's chest.

"So, Trace, what are you transporting to Blue Base?" Pushing Jones away, the Spartan pointed down at his belt.

"...Grenades. You're kidding," He jumped into the Warthog driver seat, "Well, as tough it seems to carry 6 grenades across the Canyon, I believe that I have higher priority with my Ammunition. So, if you would just give me the keys..." Trace had moved around the front of the 'Hog seat to Marcus and gripped hard on the top of his chest plate and pulled the Private out of the seat.

"Direct orders from the Corporal. You don't want to mess with him, do you?" Jones looked at the PFC and turned his head to the left, "Good. Now get your shit out of the 'Hog and go walk to Blue Base." Trace let go of the Private and pulled himself into the seat, turned the key in the ignition. Marcus pulled the ammo cases out of the passenger seat and started his long walk north to the Blue Base across Forerunner Excavation Canyon 'Coagulation'. He only passed his own base when the Warthog had smashed into a rock spire to his left. The Private didn't even look at the crashed Jeep.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," He sighed to himself, "Get out of the car, I'll drive." Crawling over the passenger seat, he pulled the seatbelt off the PFC and threw him onto the ground.

"Are you drunk?" Marcus asked, pulling the Warthog off of the rock and turning it so the passenger side up to Trace.

"Drunk? There isn't any alcohol on this whole Installation," Trace pulled himself up into the 'Hog.

"Not already made. If you heavy distill the rocket fuel from the HEAT containers, you can--"

"English, Smart ass," Trace said coolly.

"If you heat up the Rocket fuel, you get a alcoholic beverage," the Private said keeping his eyes on the plain field of dirt in front of him, "Anyway, you're loaded with explosives so before you think of igniting one - By accident or purpose - Please reconsider. There are hundreds of feet of M41 Light Anti-Aircraft ammunition plus some Armor Piercing Sniper Rounds. If you blow up, I blow up." Trace glared at him and looked away. They were both silent for several minutes until the Spartan detached a Plasma Grenade and started throwing it up and down.

"Dude, what the fuck did I just say?" He yelled, trying to grab the grenade out of Trace's hand.

"Whoa wait, watch the road!" He had turned the wheel to the left, sending them in a total spin, directing him towards their own base.

He pulled the grenade out of the PFC's hand, accidentally igniting it.

"Great," Marcus said, just holding onto the lit grenade. His fellow Spartan had already unbuckled himself and rolled out of the Hog. He peeled his eyes away from the pulsing blue light and onto the horizon, but was hit with the realizing truth that had cleverly concealed itself as a rock. The grenade had flung itself out of his grasp and launched towards his own base. Wrenching the buckle away Jones jumped out of the jeep and looked over to Trace, who had now taken off the belt. Unexpectedly, the Type-2 Antipersonnel Fragmentation 'Spike' Grenade had went off, sending hundred of spike into his chest and hands.

"Holy shit!" Was the last thing he said as another Spike Grenade erupted, sending shrapnel into his neck and visor. Taking off the Plasma Grenade now, he had activated it, sticking to his palm. It exploded, not only taking half of his arm with him, but had broken the pins in the M9 HE-DP 'Frag' Grenades. He screamed again, and instead of taking them off one by one, he threw it down at the ground, under the back bumper.

"Trace!" the Private yelled to his ally, and saw the PFC look up at him as he was engulfed by flames from the now ruptured gas tank underneath the Warthog. Shielding his visor with his forearms, Marcus Jones started to run backwards, spinning several seconds later. He booked as fast as he could, escaping the inferno by only inches. Speeding up the main ramp, he met up with the Corporal. He brandished bright red armor with a large lion imprint on the shoulder.

"Its good to have you back, Private. I didn't know you could make it to Blue base and back in only a matter of seconds," The man patted Jones on the back, "A great addition to the team with such running skills."

"Uh...Sir?" He said softly, "Permission to speak freely?"

"Go ahead, Private."

"Trace died an that explosion," He said with a fake solemn expression.

"Explosion? What explosion?" The Corporal was directed towards the flaming Warthog, "God Damn! What happened?" He yelled, looking back at Marcus again.

"Private First Class Trace Harolds accidentally ignited a Type-2 Antipersonnel Fragmentation Spike Grenade, which had accidentally ignited another one, which in turn caused him to activate a Plasma Grenade, and then two M9 HE-DP Fragmentation Grenades which had enough power to make the M12 Warthog LRV happen to--"

"What did I say about the gibberish? Speak some God Damn English, Private." Jones looked down and sighed.

"Trace blew up the Grenades and the Warthog, The Grenades and the Warthog blew up him. Happy, sir?" The last two words had a huge hint of sarcasm, but the Corporal chose not to hear them.

"Well, any soldier is a sad loss, especially when out-strengthed by a

vehicle. Good Fight, Warthog! You're one hell of a warrior!" Corporal Morgan Rollagon gave a two-finger salute to the flaming jeep. Marcus looked up at him and sighed.

"I suppose we should order another Spartan from the UNSC Orbital Space Contact Line? We could use some more Sniper Rounds and HEAT Rockets as well." The Corporal turned his head towards the Private.

"HEAT Rockets? Why would we need those?"

"Uh...The Spnkr's?"

"Now what in God's name is a Spunk-air?" The leader didn't pronounce the name correct, and struggled quite a bit, but the Private didn't take any notice in correcting him.

"The 'Spanker' is a M41 SSR MAV/AW Ro--"

"English," The Corporal said slowly, slightly hitting an open palmed slap on the side of Marcus's Helmet. There was a long awkward pause, the Private glaring through his visor.

"The '_Spanker'_ is a _Rocket...Launcher,_" He said through gritted teeth, "It _isn't _that hard to figure out. It is on the side of the Launcher." Morgan looked down for a second and then rose his head again.

"I never would've thought of that. I use HEAT rockets for drinking..." The Corporal turned around as Marcus groaned, but was quickly sent into action. A large red dot had appeared near their location. Rollagon pulled out a Spartan Laser from his back and jumped down the middle hole in the middle of the base. Jones quickly followed, holding out his own Assault Rifle. Both had fallen down the lift to the lower docking bay. The red dot flashed as the Corporal charged up the Laser.

"No!" The Private yelled, "Don't discharge that W/AV Model 6 Grindell/Galileian Nonlinear Rifle!" Before he had finished say the number 'six', a red Laser lit up the room, showing the creature that had shown up on the Radar. A small white animal hopped quickly away from his grasp, but managed to pick it up.

"It's just a rabbit, sir!"

"...What the hell is a 'rabbit'?" Again the Private groaned and dropped the white animal, picking up the Assault Rifle he had dropped.

"Corporal, sir, I advise you to contact the UNSC before you end up killing us all with that Laser, sir," He said, trying to sound as official as possible.

"Wouldn't it be more prosperous if I kill you and _then _contact the Base? It would save me two messag--"

"No, sir," Jones said, spinning about-face and started to head up the lift. Another MJOLNIR clad man had pulled his head out of the corner. He wore bright yellow armor, but the hue of red light turned him orange. Several spots in his armor had been worn off, and others were

covered with pounds of dirt.

"Does 'us' include me?" He said, his voice shaking a bit, and a long drawn out 'me'.

"No. Shut up, Seth," the Private took one step before he spoke up again.

"Please?" Again Seth had drawn out the 'E' in 'please', and Marcus had to talk over it.

"Shut up, Seth," He had put a long pause between the words and stepped up the lift. The yellow Spartan looked at the Corporal and tilted his head.

"Who are you?" His voice was strangely slurred. Morgan held out one hand and replied.

"I am Corporal Morgan Rollagon of the Spartan-II project," The other Spartan looked up at his hand.

"Who am I?"

"Ensign Seth Majors of the Spartan-II project," he said, pulling his hand back to his side. The Ensign looked up at him again.

"So...Who are you again?" The Corporal turned and walked up the lift, leaving Seth looking up at the empty ceiling. When Morgan had got up to the second level, the Private had already vanished, but took no notice of it. He flicked through the channels to the USNC Channel.

"This is Corporal Morgan Rollagon of the Forerunner Excavation Canyon '_Coagulation_' requesting a new soldier, several Armor Piercing Rounds for that...Scoped Do-hickey, and More HEAT rockets for the Spunk-airs. I repeat, requesting a new soldier, Ammo for the Scoped thing and some HEATs, over," seeming quite pleased with himself, the Spartan hoisted himself up through the hole to the top of the base.

"Smooth, sir," said the Private looking through the Sniper Rifle.

"Thank you, Private," The Corporal said with a cocky nature, leaning on one of the protruding pillars on the side of the base.

End
file.